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Report of the United Nations World Tourism Organization on tourism statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session (see E/2010/24, chap. I.A), the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) on tourism statistics, which is submitted to the Commission for information. The report provides an overview of the work undertaken by UNWTO to support national efforts in building and strengthening national statistical capacity in implementing a system for tourism statistics. The report describes the implementation programme for tourism statistics, which consists of regional capacity-building programmes, regional workshops and other national technical assistance, and describes the timetable for the development of the International Recommendations on Tourism Statistics 2008 Compilation Guide. The Commission is requested to take note of the report.

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Report of the United Nations World Tourism Organization on tourism statistics

I. Introduction

1. At its thirty-ninth session, the United Nations Statistical Commission adopted the International Recommendations on Tourism Statistics 2008 (IRTS 2008) and took note of the updated version of the Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008. These recommendations constitute an integrated set of concepts, definitions and classifications for the measurement of tourism activity. The Commission also requested the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Statistics Division to develop an implementation programme, including the preparation of a compilation guide and the organization of training workshops, in collaboration with supranational and regional organizations (see E/2008/24, decision 39/106).

2. The present report outlines the response of UNWTO and the Statistics Division to the request of the Commission. The report has two parts: part one describes the regional capacity-building programmes, additional regional workshops and other national technical assistance initiatives; and part two describes the status and timetable of the development of the IRTS 2008 Compilation Guide.

II. International Recommendations on Tourism Statistics 2008: the implementation programme for 2008-2012

3. The present section summarizes different types of initiatives undertaken by UNWTO either on its own (in the case of direct technical assistance to member countries) or in collaboration with the Statistics Division and other international and regional organizations (in the case of regional workshops).

A. Regional capacity-building programmes

4. UNWTO has developed a prototype for its capacity-building programme to be applied in different regions over a five-year period, divided into segments that involve intensive and highly technical training of officials from national tourism administrations, national statistical offices, central banks and, to the extent possible, migration authorities. One country in each region is designated as the "regional hub" and serves as the regional training centre. The first regional capacity-building programmes were held in Europe and Africa with training centres in Austria and South Africa respectively. A successful programme was also held in Central America and a new one, under the leadership of the Inter-American Development Bank, will be implemented in the so-called Southern Cone countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay). Another capacity-building programme is being developed for the Asia-Pacific region, in cooperation with Australia and New Zealand.

5. The programmes are structured around two training modules: (a) technical workshops with a small number of invited countries; and (b) a regional seminar open to all countries in the region. In the interest of strengthening regional cooperation, the United Nations regional commissions and regional organizations

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such as Eurostat, the Standard International Classification of Tourism Activities, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the Regional Tourism Organization of Southern Africa and the African Development Bank are always invited to participate.

6. The main objective of the capacity-building programme is the implementation of IRTS 2008. Specific goals include documenting available statistics and administrative records to be used for measuring tourism activity; identifying how the present measurement of resident and non-resident visitors can be improved; and fostering the macroeconomic analysis of tourism.

7. The regional capacity-building programme consists of three consecutive training workshops for a selected, small number of countries and one regional seminar. The purpose of the technical workshops is to train senior statisticians from specialized national institutes. The participants are expected to implement concrete tasks and recommendations after the first workshop and to present the work accomplished and share their experience at the second workshop.

8. UNWTO selects countries for the technical workshops based on the national commitments to tourism statistics, namely:

(a) The determination of national tourism administrations and national statistical offices to give priority to the development of their national system of tourism statistics;

(b) The work being carried out by the national tourism administration and/or national statistical office on tourism statistics and any concrete projects planned for the upcoming two years;

(c) The list of initiatives carried out by the national tourism administration, national statistical office and central bank on basic and related tourism statistics;

(d) The commitment to develop corresponding metadata using UNWTO formats.

B. Regional workshops on tourism statistics

9. In addition to the work done within the framework of such capacity-building programmes, additional regional workshops were organized by the Statistics Division and UNWTO in 2009 and 2010 for the South-East Asian countries, the States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Georgia. The objective of the workshops was to train representatives from the national statistical offices, national tourism authorities and central banks of these countries in methodological developments in tourism statistics and current country practices in compiling tourism statistics. The training workshops focused on both the interpretation of conceptual issues and options for the implementation of IRTS 2008 in country-specific circumstances and facilitated the establishment of a regional network of statisticians. Additional regional workshops are planned to support the implementation of IRTS 2008, as requested by the Commission.

10. The workshops in South-East Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States region concluded with a number of recommendations for the participating countries to advance the work in this area; specifically, it was recommended that they should strengthen cooperation and collaboration among national statistical offices, national tourism authorities and central banks to provide a systematic

exchange of information, establish coordinated workplans and ensure the completeness and quality of data. In the recommendations, the attention of the heads of the institutes responsible for tourism statistics was drawn to the importance of establishing a regular programme of official statistical surveys for collecting good-quality data for tourism statistics and making a strong case for their funding. It was further recommended that countries should develop an in-depth understanding of the necessary classifications (International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Central Product Classification and Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose) and adopt them for the production and compilation of tourism statistics at the national and local levels.

C. Technical assistance missions

11. As mentioned, the regional capacity-building programmes are intended to provide national delegates with a good understanding of the work required to produce tourism statistics in line with the new international recommendations. A prototype of technical assistance missions has also been developed by UNWTO to assist countries under two basic scenarios:

(a) Case 1: Design and enhancement of the national system of tourism statistics. This is offered to countries with limited tourism statistics and usually covers inbound tourism and some characteristics of visitor flows and, rarely, information on expenditures. In these cases, UNWTO would design a programme to strengthen primary data collection.

(b) Case 2: Development of an experimental tourism satellite account. This would be offered to countries that have already established a basic system of tourism statistics that includes some observation of tourism expenditure and of the supply by tourism industries. In the best-case scenario, their national accounts would include a supply and use table. If there is sufficient information to proceed, UNWTO would propose assisting the country in setting up an experimental tourism satellite account according to the general guidelines developed by the national statistical office, as a means of further identifying major gaps or inconsistencies and recommending basic statistical improvements to overcome these constraints.

12. The case 2 scenario may also be applied to further develop the tourism satellite account for countries that have an experimental or "simulated" satellite account that presents serious inconsistencies or where the method of compilation or data generation used clearly does not comply with the established international recommendations. In such cases, UNWTO could provide assistance on how to develop the satellite account and align the statistical processes with the recommended international frameworks.

13. During the period 2008-2010, 12 countries in Europe, 14 countries in Africa and 5 countries in Central America participated in training workshops; another 14 participated in technical assistance missions. For the period 2011-2012, UNWTO plans two additional programmes for French-speaking countries in Africa and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Regional Tourism Organization of Southern Africa has agreed to provide another 14 African countries with ad hoc technical assistance coordinated by UNWTO.

III. Developing the International Recommendations on Tourism Statistics 2008 Compilation Guide

14. The implementation programme applied during the period 2008-2010 included supporting training material, workshops and technical assistance programmes for countries to identify the challenges of compiling basic data and indicators explained in IRTS 2008. In 2010, UNWTO prepared an updated version of the *Compendium of Tourism Statistics* for international comparability of tourism activity, including an expanded set of basic data and indicators in line with IRTS 2008. As requested by the Commission, UNWTO and the Statistics Division also started preparing the corresponding IRTS 2008 Compilation Guide, based on best practices in collecting basic tourism statistics and indicators.

15. The Compilation Guide is fully aligned with IRTS 2008 and contains additional information on certain typical compilation issues, such as setting up the system of tourism statistics and identifying the basic information framework for international comparability of tourism statistics, and checking consistency in survey data and reconciliation among data provided by different sources. The Compilation Guide will have two different formats, namely an e-document with hyperlinks to IRTS 2008 and other international standards, country case studies and complementary relevant material, which will be regularly updated and will be available in English only; and a publication in PDF format, which will be translated into other languages (except for the hyperlinks to case studies and complementary material).

16. The Compilation Guide reflects the conviction that the improvement and standardization of statistical data collection and measurement instruments in the field of tourism will lead to increasingly reliable and comparable figures in a worldwide context. In order to produce a high-quality compilation guide, a consultation process (with a timetable) was established, as shown in annex I to the present report. This process started in November 2010, with the review of the first six draft chapters. In March 2011, the full draft of the Compilation Guide will be distributed for a worldwide consultation, the results of which will be reviewed at an expert group meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in May 2011. The final version is expected to be approved by the UNWTO Committee on Statistics at its meeting in January 2012.

IV. Conclusion

17. **UNWTO and the United Nations Statistics Division responded to the request of the Statistical Commission in 2008 to develop an implementation programme for tourism statistics, including the preparation of a compilation guide and the organization of training workshops. Regional capacity-building programmes for tourism statistics were developed and implemented in Africa, Central America and Europe, and additional training workshops were conducted in Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States region. The IRTS 2008 Compilation Guide is currently being developed and will be completed by the end of 2011. The Commission may wish to take note of the present report.**

Annex

Timetable for completion of the International Recommendations on Tourism Statistics 2008 Compilation Guide

November 2010 — Consultation with a limited number of countries on the draft Compilation Guide (first six chapters)

- Content: Chapters 1 to 6 (including accommodation services only)
- Focus: General overview of comments and suggestions, and identification of case studies

December 2010 — Chapter 7 "Linking supply and demand"

- To be sent to the UNWTO Technical Advisory Board for consultation

January 2011

- Preparation of a report with countries' comments and suggestions
- Meeting of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics (27 and 28 January)
- UNWTO Technical Advisory Board provides comments on chapter 7
- General discussion on the draft Compilation Guide:
  - (a) Presentation of comments and suggestions received;
  - (b) Basic findings;
  - (c) Suggestions for updating the draft Compilation Guide;
  - (d) How to complete chapter 6.

February/March 2011

- Full revised draft of the Compilation Guide
- Provide information to the United Nations Statistical Commission on progress made
- Worldwide consultation (first week of March), including a questionnaire with specific questions on each chapter

April 2011

- Preparation of the report with the replies received (second week)
- Send the report to members of the United Nations Expert Group on Tourism Statistics

May 2011

- Expert Group meeting, tentatively in the second week of May (Brazil)

November 2011

- Circulate the Compilation Guide to the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and the and Technical Advisory Board for finalization

January 2012

- Discussion on the Compilation Guide at the meeting of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics

February 2012

- Post the finalized version of the Compilation Guide on the United Nations Statistics Division and UNWTO websites